



Hallmarks 2016



Delicate Armor

A Literary Magazine
Upper School • Harpeth Hall

*Writing, when you stop to think about it,
is a miracle (as ordinary things often are).*

-Lillie Penley

Hallmarks 2016

The Harpeth Hall School
3801 Hobbs Road
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title by Caroline Scudder
cover photograph by Evie Witty
photograph (opposite) by Sadie Paczosa

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We Begin

*People are like books: some famous,
some banned, and many undiscovered.*

-Katherine Coode



Hockney-inspired photographic collage by Marguerite Trost

Symbiosis

Vivian Herzog

each knows her place, sure of her purpose.
able to be srcmabdle and unscrambled,
strong enough to stand alone,
yet humble enough to playwithothers.
sneaky and spirited; for four sounds like for in addition to two and too.
you can read and have read and see red,
but only as long your head's on straight and you're not in dire straits.

never jealous, ever primed,
for her very nature is that of song.
melodies of soft murmurs and whispered confessions of love,
lullabies of shouts and yells and screams and cries.

we owe everything to her,
and she to us.
for without the hand that holds the pen
and without the mouth that speaks the thought,
she would be only a shape, a soldier in a row of 26.

Ties that Bind

To Those Who Have Been Given Much

Claire Smith

When I was little,
I would visit my grandmother at the red brick house on Sewanee Road.
She would read me “Winnie the Pooh” from her musty, dusty book,
Make me black-eyed peas and cornbread in her cast iron skillet,
And at night she would tuck me under the pink linen sheets and flowered quilt,
Whispering, “I love you deeper than the deepest ocean,
Wider than the widest valley,
And bigger than the whole wide world.”

Yesterday I picked up my grandmother
from the Blakeford Senior Living Community.
I helped her into my car, drove her to church,
Escorted her to her Sunday School classroom,
Waiting as she hobbled up the stairs,
Pausing after each one.
Her eyes meet mine,
Disclosing her feelings of inner vexation and outward gratitude.
I smile back with a different countenance.
“Don’t worry,” my eyes reply,
“I love you bigger than the whole wide world,
And I always will.”

digital photograph (opposite) by Bradford Harrington

Brief Love-type Poems

Ella McKenzie

1.

you were always my madheart music,
suntossed by love-colored
waves and stumbling through
the blue-hot sand.
various musicalia in my mind
pounded you brighter and brighter
as over hills of my pure
psyche you
climbed, and when I lay
at night under glowing star stickers,
you were half at home
and half with me.

2.

There was
a time when you
were a living home to me
; now (a planet) you are unreachable.

Please live
within the space bordered by my eyes.
You are
the curvature of my earth.

3.

I am dripping from the
pool of you, from
your elephantine love (red)
crimson bleeding joyride heart...you gave and stole,
and I from you, your hand,
and now you hold a suitcase
and I a pen,

and so goes
the glacier.

once I told you that you held
my rusty heart
between your knees
and you told me
you could hold on

...

monoprint (opposite) by Georgia Slattery



Red

Valerie Sheehan

When I hear the word conflict,
I remember the hard stairwell where we used to sit,
always so cold in the winter.

I remember the sour candied taste on my tongue
after an argument,
and then salt faint on my lips,
always salt.

But before the salt was iron,
when I bit my tongue to keep from saying things

I didn't mean,
and it tasted red,
and I saw red,
always red with you.

Just in the way my color is blue and
hers is that cotton-candy pink,
yours is red,

red like the setting sun,
and red like fire—

Red like conflict.

I remember the way you made me want to scream and
throw my sanity across the room
to shatter the mirror of your façade—
perhaps I'd add another

7 years of bad luck
to the 16 I've already spent,
or perhaps it would
break the curse.
I remember how alive I felt when
your whispers
lit the sky in flames and made my veins
molten lead,
and I almost miss it.

But then I remember how it felt
to tape myself back together after
your words broke me apart and
I don't feel the loss so sharply.

Now

I am in love with the world
instead of with you,
now I taste clementines
and feel the rain
soft and silver on my soul.

But somehow, still,
I can't forget the flaming sky in your eyes.

I can't forget the red that
shook me to life.

monoprint by Georgia Slattery



Milo's Tea

Kristen Barrett

The grandfather clock struck midnight, and I poured myself another glass of Milo's sweet tea. Squirted a bit of lime in for some tang. Both kids were in bed—their scampering had subsided around 9:30—and Susie was curled up around my slippered feet. Hunched over my glass, I tried to avoid eye contact with the haggard face in the mirror across the way. I massaged my tight temples as the beat of the second hand reverberated through my mind.

Click.

He's home.

I remained motionless. He entered the dark kitchen, saw me, paused, and sat in a chair directly in front of me. Only a few feet of table separated us. In the darkness, I could barely see the details of his face—only those God-awful bushy eyebrows I used to tweeze on Sunday mornings.

Susie meowed.

Those busy eyebrows rose and fell with a sigh. He murmured something unintelligible and started to reach for my glass. I snatched it away. Took a good long drink. Smacked my lips very audibly.

He mumbled something else. Vexed, I glared unabashedly at the shadow of my once beloved husband.

"Speak up," I said. "I can't understand you when you mutter like that."

The eyebrows regarded me coolly. "Are the kids asleep?"

I nodded. "They needed rest. I'll have to take them to school early tomorrow."

"I can take one of them."

"No." An agitated moment of tension held us closely, so intimately that I stood up to turn my back on him. "I don't want that. They're not your concern anymore."

"I promised Bobby. How can I explain..."

Blazing fury rose in my chest. My nails began to dig into the oak chair I leaned against.

"Fine," I conceded. "You take him." Slowly, I turned to face the shadowy man.

"And please do try to explain this, this mess to him. Because God knows I can't."

He didn't answer at first. "I didn't mean for this to happen," he mustered.

The insulting cliché pierced me to the very core. Suddenly, I felt an incredibly

strong desire to laugh. I did. I could sense him staring at me without even meeting his gaze.

"Y-you," I managed through a cackle, "Didn't mean for this to happen? Oh, that's rich. That's really rich."

I sank back into my chair, pausing to swallow another gulp of tea.

"I suppose you'd say that the colonists didn't mean to create institutionalized racism in America through slavery or that Hitler didn't mean to singlehandedly cause the deaths of millions of innocent people? That just all of a sudden—WHOOPS—they ruined generations of lives, but it just happened?!?"

Nothing.

I inhaled deeply. "You got a college girl pregnant, Seth. That doesn't just happen—"

"Leona—"

"Save it."

"Please—"

Crash.

Without a word, he slowly looked over his shoulder to see where my glass of Milo's tea lay in shards below a splattered wall.

"Goodnight," I said, disappearing into our bedroom with him locked outside.



photograph and photographic details (digitally altered) by Taylor Farrington

Identity

This Life Chose Me

Alaina Baird

You see me from across the room
in my little black dress.
Your eyes flickering up, down; bloodshot
because
you've been drunk:
Trying, failing to escape
horrors of the world.
I can take you to a land where
you won't remember
the before.
Come on, sinner—let me hold your hand;
I'll give you a bit of bitter wine
and some of my night—
It's just my job,
Not one desired by many, but
Every day and in the dark I can help you,
because I'm
a nun.



If Ice Were a Mother, How She Would Burn

Ashley Zhu

I will name my daughter Echo
So when I call her name
She will always come back to me.

We will explore the alphabet together
On her report card
And discover the range of rainbow numbers
On elevator buttons
and I will tell her that no floor
is too high for her to reach
(except, maybe, the ones she actually can't)

I will be the person she tells about
the cute birthday card
she made for her best friend
or the one who receives pinwheels
in a bouquet like flowers
for mine

And you will tell when she is coming
because everything will clatter
and heads will turn
because she will be disturbing the peace
of watching life pass by
on silent television
and her keychains and books will be falling
like her hair from her ponytail holder
and she will be laughing.

And people will shush her
because
she will treat words like sustenance
saving *thank yous* for dessert
and *I love yous* for the last bite
she will be the type of person
who does not photograph well
for she will only be beautiful when she is
moving

And when she is older
and no longer clatters
but walks with the grace of a rainstorm
She will call my name
and I will always come back to her.



photograph (opposite) by Paige Derwenskus; photo detail (above) by Taylor Farrington

Self

Y'Yemaya Boyd

Smile and eyes,
Man and woman blended.
Am I her?
Am I him?
Half and half
Eyes like her,
Smile like him.

I don't want to be
like him
But I am.
Blood is blood,
No changing my blend.



Shakespeare Shakur

Helen Weaver

I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again.
My ear should catch your voice,
My eye, your eye.
But love looks not with the eyes,
But with the mind.
I suffer love!
I love thee against my will.
Oh God, help me.

Constantly yearning 2 be accepted
The walls that were once firm and tall
Now crumble 2 the ground.
No one dares 2 breathe
In fear of self-expression
In this dormant and uncaring society.
If I am 2 be true, than I must give my fragile heart.
Spare me—if U please.



colored pencil with ink (above) and silkscreen (backdrop) by Grace Bradley
charcoal, ink, and chalk (opposite) by Mariama Dodd

Blind

Caroline Daniel

A man Who resembles a roll Of used wrapping paper Cracks Onto the crosswalk.	Held his wife's frail hand, When he could see The traffic whirring by—
His sweater stained with Pills, Wedding cakes, Smoked cigars, Gray meat that smells like IV fluid, Memories.	When he could See the distracted girl, Two hands typing hello, Two eyes looking in the mirror At her spotless skin, Injected, electric lips, Smoky eyes.
Glasses thick as window panes, Weathered ears with amplifiers Turned up to 10, Flowers in his Gray fingers, Radiant yellows and reds, To highlight the dingy, Gray stone That his wife calls Home.	One leg on the gas. No eyes On the red light.
Uncertain eyes, Darting, Forced footsteps shuffle across The asphalt, Time travels away.	Shattered flowers Line the street, Blood covers the Tumbling red petals.
He reminisces On golden days, When his skin didn't sag In tumbling petals, When his strong fingers	Blind businessmen Suddenly find their eyes Opened. The young girl cries out a waterfall, Tears tainting her Spotless skin. Engines growl and Sirens roar, The sound of death pierces The crisp, autumn air.
	People rush, yell, cry, But it is too late— His wife opens the door, And he is home.

oil on canvas (details) by Callie Jane Simmons

J. Gatsby

Caroline Scudder



The sparkling difference between him and other men was incalculable.
We spoke, only once, and that was all it took.
My drunken haze somehow enhanced my ability to see
The very magic that blossomed
In his self-created mind: the ineffable distance from realism that
Had swallowed him.
On his head was bestowed the gift of deep eyes
That could peer past the pellucid waters
Which so delicately smoothed the mountains of time.
His love for grandiose wealth and his superficial tendencies—
Well he was just like the rest of us.
There was more to him than golden parties full of timeless people
Or the forgotten whoosh of glowing sports cars.
It was his hope. It was always his hope ... and his belief
In fate to create their inevitable reunion.
I knew that a man like that would never venture into the halls of a retired home of
Pale, persistent pages
Or last long enough to reach the ripe old age that many men take for granted.
Few came to his burial that day,
But the safe-house and nestling of their undestroyed past
Would forever lay amongst the woven labyrinth of his mind.
For the inner carvings of mankind search endlessly for the effervescent beauty
That lies above and below and perhaps beneath cloistered fixtures
And the torn pages of eternity.

Catching the Blood Moon

Keely Hendricks

A smoking pipe, cradled between large fingers,
And dark waves of hair that curl to the left—
Málaga wine, and red chalk Spanish sunsets.
What did I want more than anything? you asked,
Holding up your *copa*, looking at me through
thumb-smudged glass.

Just a few things, I replied:

To never grow old,
To travel the Silk Road,
To catch the blood moon.
Too easy, you said, winking,
taking a sip.

I'm looking back through all of our pictures,
listless on a rainy day.
There's some cheap disposable camera shots—
Monks walking in front of us on a crumbling road,
Czech musicians sitting on their heels,
Tuning their guitars,
And a dark crimson moon, rising above our knees.
I'd say we got close enough.

But my hair is still sprouting silver stems,
And you shuffle on the carpet
When you get up in the dead of night, for cough syrup.
I've spent a lot of time in silent rooms
And beds with your side turning cold.
You've met a lot of men with lilting accents and shadowy eyebrows.

I've worn many gem-toned swathes of silk,
laughing politely.
I hated our rich people parties;
You worshipped them.

At 20, you were dark, bold, and romantic.
At 40, you were rich, scheming, and easily bored.

Now, you're just old, regretful, and coughing,
Searching for that medicine, slippers against carpet
Lulling me to sleep.

I pretend it's the purring of a moped
As it takes us
Around dangerous Italian streets,
Searching for that moon—
A dome of blood on the Earth's finger.



photograph by Evie Witty; passport courtesy of Jon Rawlinson (Creative Commons)

Deception

Subtraction

Ashley Zhu

Dear Subtraction,
 The sum of my life is to prove love exists.
 Do you remember it at all? Remember us?
 I remember.

I remember thinking that maybe you were my imaginary friend because you were so wondrously unreal. I remember just outside the library where we read realistic fiction because that was our favorite (or was it yours?).

And I remember how we became each other's shadows. But even then I should have realized that a shadow doesn't depend on a person: it depends on the sun. We were even and we were odd, that dysfunctional year. We didn't need anyone else and I guess you were like a polygon with a hundred sides—you seemed so much like a circle, but you weren't ...really. I loved the dark jokes we made about how you were lucky you didn't have to live that long—you wouldn't lose your goodness the way our parents did.

And I loved the way you always wrote your name in ALL CAPS, as if your name would always be important and even the standard lowercase letters were not enough for it. I remember wishing I could live like that: a life in ALL CAPS.

You truly amazed me; I hope you know that. You amazed me when I asked you what you wanted for your birthday and you said you just wanted a fish and an apple tree. When you asked me if stars would feel like clouds if you touched them or the way you loved "triangle words" like *recreational*. The way you amassed strangeness in your spare time and told the worst stories with no punch line.

I should have known when you told me you didn't believe in the word *accident*. I should have known the way you treated people like variables (replaceable and dependent on you). I should have known from the fact that I'm a hypochondriac and I never felt sick in your presence.

You told me that cancer was different for everyone when I ignorantly asked how you could still live a life in ALL CAPS at stage four. I think you meant love. Love is different for everyone: you decided to keep mine instead of giving it back.

Near the end of your life with me, the days were all bad: like the day you told me you were going to kill yourself because I didn't believe in you or the day you said you were going to die in four months—yet four years later you are alive and still dead to me.

Now I see that calibrating the world according to the color scheme of a love is not the best way to go because the one you love can lie. From the day you met me, you lied, and in the end even my calibrations could no longer pretend otherwise.

No matter how or where I measure you, your perimeter—the entirety of your being will always be defined by an irrational number. You, like all those other hurricane humans who hurt without hate—your aftermath blocked the sun; leaving no shadows except for mine.

And the day we met when you said, *Hi, I will subtract you,*

I should have said, *Hi*

It's funny how the word 'left' sounds a lot like the word 'loved.'

It's funny how you never left me.

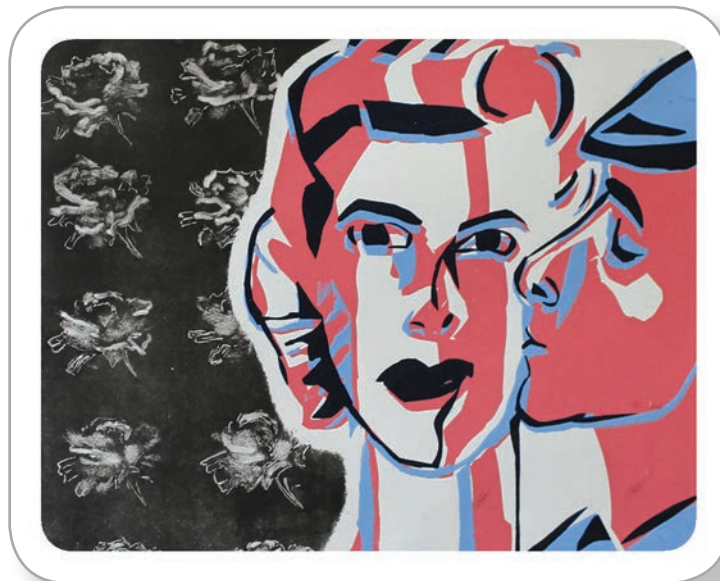
acrylic and gold leaf on canvas by Emily Warren

A Chaser's Curse

Olivia Clair Shephard

As a young lady
I was particular in choosing my men,
But once I chose them,
They were as good as mine.
I pursued and I lured with intent so fierce,
It pervaded my emotions,
It invaded my mind.
I'd twirl my hair and I'd bat my eyes,
I'd don a feminine gaiety in disguise,
It was only a matter of time—
His eyes were obscure like the moon,
But not so far away.

He smelled of fire, passion, desire,
I indulged in the fever of the chase.
When at last he gave in,
I was not surprised,
Hunter became Hunted,
I'd claimed my prize,
He gave me all the love in the world—
My mouth watered for the apple,
But once tasted it was rotten.
I thought myself mistaken.
When He asked, "*Where are you?*"
I realized I was naked.



silk screen + monoprint by Gracie Pope

Perfect

Emily Jenkins



A compassionate grin and
Politely averted eyes,
Never one to evoke uneasiness.
Simply without flaw,
Blessed with a heart of gold and a soul of compassion.
Graceful and composed beyond a skinned knee
Beyond jealousy, beyond hatred, beyond awkwardness.

I'll never forget the day
I walked into the powder room
And saw her applying makeup to her face.
She turned, startled, and for a brief moment
I saw her fear.
Fear of exposure.
I turned away, politely averting my eyes,
Not wanting to evoke uneasiness
At the obvious sight
Of the blue and black discolorations on her cheeks.

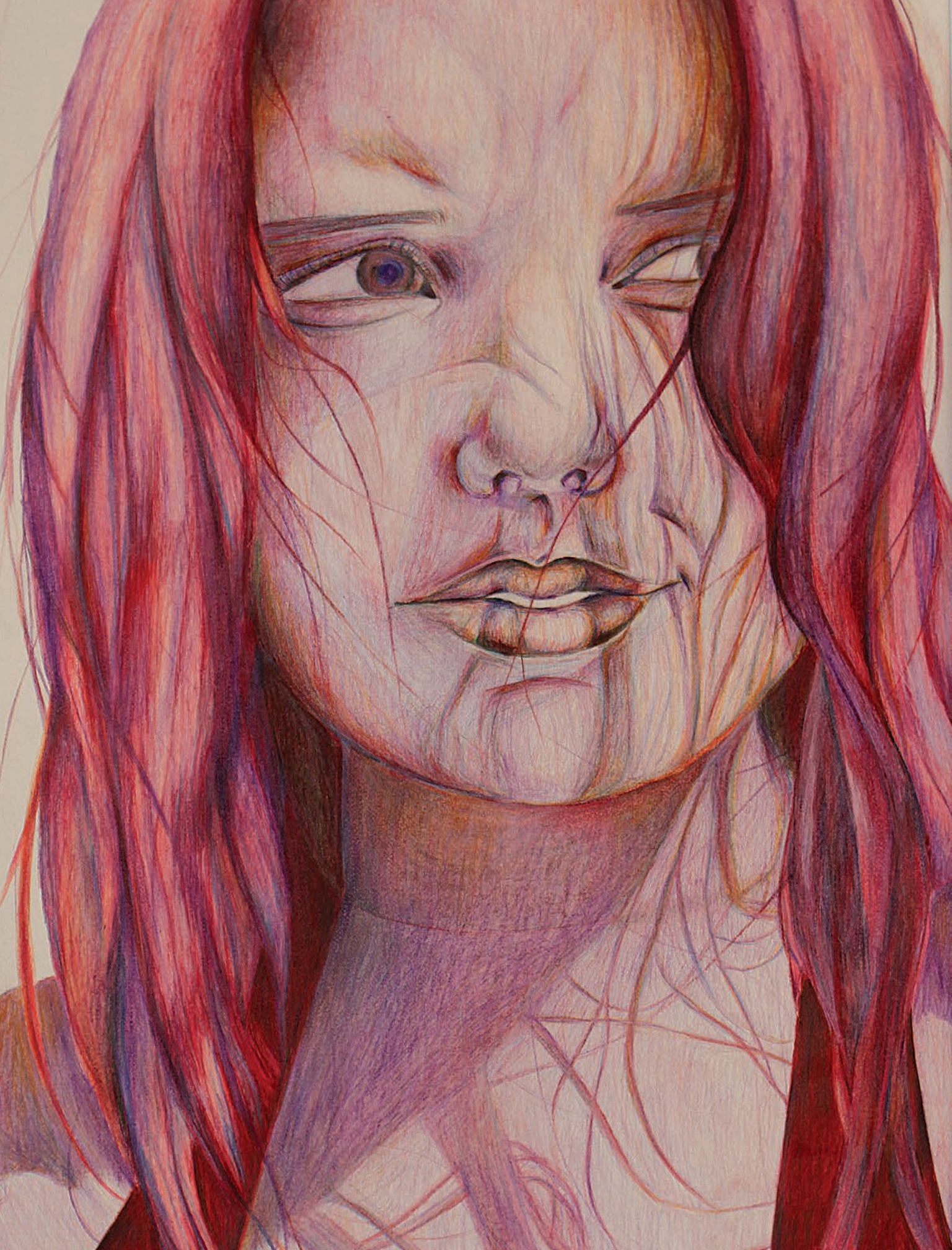
Dr. God

Kelsey Kay Herring

My daddy likes to talk with his hands —
Painting a picture in the air with words that I don't quite understand.
He tells of sleeping people on tables pale
White gauze and red blood
Under his fingernails.
He usually washes his hands.
He tells stories
Over dinner
Of how he has to break bones
In order to set them straight.
"Healing requires pain, honey"
He says, his words adding weight
To the heavy room.
"That's what makes my job great,
Straightening out the crooked in people just like you."
His hands mime the breaking
The snapping.
I close my eyes to the red hue
The room has become
And squeeze my hands together to make them stop
Shaking.
And while I don't pray to my daddy —
Those letters are reserved for someone else —
I can't help but wonder if my god held my broken body in his
Bloody hands
And said the same thing.

photograph by Paige Derwenskus





Snag

Olivia Krueger

Friendship is like a sock.
It comes in all different forms,
comforts you,
and provides protection from harm.

One day, you notice a loose thread.
As hard as you try to ignore it, you can't resist.
You pull at it
and create a hole.
The sock's not the same as it used to be.
After some time, you can't help yourself
and unravel more and more.
Now, there's no sock,
just a pile of thread,
and it's all your fault.

I Remember

Georgia Weathers

I remember the first four-leaf clover you ever gave me.
We were on a walk through my neighborhood
And you crouched down,
And I thought something was wrong until
You stood back up holding a clover.
You put it in my left hand and held my right
And we kept walking.
I can still remember the sun
And the heat
And the way you smelled right after you got out of the shower.
But even four-leaf clovers die.
That's why I spent that night crying
And you spent that night kissing her.

colored pencil drawing (opposite) by Julia Nahley

Dictionary

Ashley Zhu

The moment I saw you I wondered if you would ever feel The way I did just then (inadequate) As if You had ripped out my throat And put it in my heart So it would sing	And I liked how you got fishing gear for Christmas one year Just so you could go fishing in the air and clouds
I liked how when night came the stars rose in your eyes and you became awake	But most importantly I liked how you gave me a dictionary with the words <i>sadness</i> and <i>incapable</i> crossed out so I would never have them in my vocabulary
I liked how the only bruises you get were from ringing hand bells Or accidental umbrellas	
I liked how you were the type of person That the word <i>lilac</i> fits But not the color Just its gentleness	but you should have also crossed out the word <i>truth</i> because you didn't have that word in yours.



photographic detail (above) by Paige Derwenskus
photograph (opposite) by Taylor Farrington



The Girl Next to the Roses

Kristen Barrett

When I met her that day in the northwest corner of the church garden next to the rosebush, I didn't notice her name or her face, but I was drawn to her velvety voice.

Her voice was indigo streaks across a dusk sky. Deep and fleeting. I never wanted her words to cease, yet she'd look at me so expectantly, waiting for a reply. I would smile or laugh lightly. I couldn't match the color of her voice. While her words stirred rivers in me, mine fell flat as a slab of slate, cold to the touch. A small gesture was all I could offer, a short intermission before she unleashed more wondrous music from her soul.

What I didn't hear that day or after was the anger lying underneath her words. I was too busy admiring those indigo streaks to notice the blood-red pooling around them. The signs were all there. I should have heard the aching crimson in her voice. Or the scarlet tears dripping from her words. All of her was seething with red ... and I missed it.

Now I will never again hear those indigo streaks across the dusk sky. Only echoes of red. As I visit that same rosebush, I remember the girl who dazzled me with syllables, who couldn't be saved from herself.

Snapshots



1989

Keely Hendricks

It's Moscow in 1989:
You're standing on a large balcony,
A throng of bustling Russians blurred in the background

You're 29 years old, no make-up
In an oversized brown leather jacket and bangs.

You've been traveling the world for five years,
And I know—although you didn't at the time—
That you'll be traveling for five more.

Always wandering,
Bright-faced and benign, unafraid
Of rude men, foreign maps, and loneliness.

Are you afraid now that I have made the same choice?
Afraid of the people I may encounter,
Of the wrong turns I may take,
Of the stifling quietness that I'll leave behind?
You forget how much of you is in me. You forget your own strength of will.

The straps of my backpack pinch my hips.
I reek of Deet and moxie.
You keep touching my cheeks, reminding me of all the dangers:
The drug cartels, the carnivorous plants,
Jungles that only spit up the bones.

You snap a picture before I board the plane,
When I'm not really looking,
And I wonder
If you see yourself, instead:
Blonde and ambitious,
Rash and uncoiled,
Stupidly young.

I wonder if you are just now realizing
How much you broke your mother's heart.

colored pencil on paper (opposite) by Sadie Paczosa

Innocence in the Summertime

Murray Hannon

You wanted to have a good time
Clothes tight, hair back
Barefoot Saturday in the summer
Whoever wanted to pick you up
It didn't matter
As long as they took you somewhere else
Where the grass was green
and soft beneath your toes

And a glittery smoke filled the air
Clouding all the things that scared you
In that moment
When the heat stuck to you like syrup
And your smile chattered on
About happy nothings
It wasn't naïve to believe in strawberry fields
And good times

Space

Murray Hannon

Driving down our favorite street at night
His hands tapping the steering wheel
To the beat of a song
My head out the window
Other headlights going by
In a ceaseless stream of light
Each glowing like a star
And I remember why
I wanted to be an astronaut
6 years old,
Laying on the side

Of a North Carolina mountain
Sprawled out and gripping the grass
Afraid that I would fall into space
If I didn't hold on
The stars called my name
And I could hear it
Like a pounding in my chest
Thousands of miles away,
But the voice still rung unshaken—
*There is always something more to do
And somewhere else to go*



*colored pencil drawing
by Helen Riley Lazenby*

Dear Boston

Bianca Sass



b&w photograph by Ifeanyi Da Silva; Boston skyline courtesy of Rick Berk (Creative Commons)

It was four-thirty a.m. and the sky was a pearl when I was driving through Boston. Driving through the beating, pulsing heart of the city. Even so early, it throbbed. My pulse echoed.

The soaring buildings were just opening their glowing eyes, while mine were begging to shut. Our vehicle's wheels tiptoed down a road that was just a string in this ball-of-yarn city, and it would unravel at Nanna's apartment: where I would glide up the elevator and go back to sleep. But for now I was confined to a car. A car with soft seats and big windows. I looked outside, and for the first time, I saw.

The avenues yawned and stretched, and the streetlights blinked a few times, spilling their honey-colored light. I knew that soon the sun would be shot, boom, like a gun. It would shatter the quiet, shatter the cloudy, silver dawn. Hand in hand with the

day, the night fires the pistol then scurries away. Morning takes off running. Subways chugging, blinds snapping up, constellations rolling out of bed. But for now, everything was just starting to stir. A runner flitting past, a man with a briefcase bustling by.

Suddenly the car stopped, screeched, slammed to a stop, and we were at the apartment, and I was inside, but I didn't want to be. Inside and back to reality. Inside and small. Inside and shutting the door in my future's face. Shutting the door on the city. Outside, the city. It beckoned. And, God, I wanted to stay to see what a life of my own could look like.

What an awful time for a flight, Nanna cooed. I nodded, nodded, nodded. People love when you do that.

But something wasn't right. A grandmother's cashmere hug is warm, and smile that loves you is nice, but a leather passenger's seat is demeaning. And a city waiting for you to dance with it, hand in hand, makes you want grow up. Up like a skyscraper. Up to touch the moon. I need to remember that stars are formed in swirling nebulae of complete and utter entropy.

I nod at my grandmother. Yes, Nanna. I'm tired. But I wanted to scream that life outside was just starting. Starting for those waking up to another day living somewhere alive.

Although, yes, it's true. I am tired. Tired of tired. Tired of stepping back into a place I used to call home, then I realize I've grown or maybe they've shrunk. Or waking up in a place unfamiliar and realizing right now I'm too small or they're too big, but one day we'll both be ready, and maybe we'll even explode. I'll explode. But these feelings dance hand in hand, intertwined. One cannot come without the other. Can't want to be big unless you feel small. Because matter cannot be created nor destroyed, everything is just becoming what it was going to be all along.

How is school going? Any news on what you want to be? Nanna asks, asks, asks, like grandmothers do.

How can I explain that all I want to be is myself somewhere that can handle me, somewhere that has no choreography. Just movement. Movement all the time. So I don't. I just promise Boston that I'll come back, one day, when I'm ready. Ready to call that whole skyline my house. I promise I'll be back.

Chances and Rounds

Y’Yemaya Boyd

Winter break

2 weeks of hints

One stiff movie

All hope is lost



photograph by KK Savage

College Fair

Kelly Short

Making my way through the herd
To meet my potential future.

As the pearly gates of the
Gym swing open, I am on the prowl.

The booths set up
Like prom night—
Tables for smart girls,
Tables for athletes,
Tables that no one will notice.

I see my future
Decorated
In orange and blue:

The University. My promised Land.
A place where education is valued,
School spirit is limitless,
And males outnumber females.

I see my Moses from afar
Who will lead me
Through the college process,
And safely,
Like the Israelites,
To the land of milk and honey.

The closer I get,
The more I notice.
He is not what I saw
20 feet back.

Turtle man greets me timidly
Like a turtle would.
When I start to ask

One of my questions
Turtle man snaps:
*What is your GPA
And your best
ACT score?*

I admit to him
My numbers.
He extends
His everlasting neck:

*Well ...
(The pause of a lifetime)
... That would’ve gotten you in last year ...
(Another pause)
... but ... things have changed since.*

Turtle man shrinks
Back into his shell,
Signaling the end
Of our conversation.

I never get the chance
To pick up a
“GO TO OUR SCHOOL” packet.
Or a
“LET US SPAM YOU WITH EMAILS” card.

The herd
Shuffles me off
Onto other schools that
Seem less of a promised land.
So I leave.

Back to square one.
Rejected.

Swing

Anna Grace Cole



Water crashes through the stern,
Coxswain calls slice the air
Catch, send
Catch, send.

Icy rain stings skin;
Push back hard through the wind,
Heartbeat aching for the win.
Catch, send
Catch, send.

Hands grip tight,
Pull to the chest.
Lungs and legs begging for rest.

Blood screaming in the ears—
Catch, send
Catch, send.

Mind grows clear,
Movement smooth.
Wind stops howling,
Coxswain calm.
One motion,
One body;
Moving one boat.

“That’s it, girls,
Catch together.
You’ve got the swing.”

photograph by Janet Ann Horner

The Generations

Stella Vujic

He sits in a suit
Complete with coat and tie
His hair finely gelled
Shoes polished to a shine

Meanwhile, I am dressed in jeans
Leather jacket and sneakers to boot
My hair wet and wavy
My observations acute

The old man sips his coffee
I sip mine
The pancakes arrive
We each begin to dine

I watch him read
A rustling newspaper, the New York Times
Then turn to my own copy
Which is online

He squints at the black-and-white print
I squint at the bright screen
This is the gap, the two generations
The time unseen

What separates us,
This man and I?
Is it the advancement of technology
Or the nature of our minds?

We both sit silently
Reflecting upon the words
I take a bite of my pancakes
And there’s one thing of which I’m sure

There is no curtain, no wall
No insurmountable divide
Nothing between the generations
Except a little bit of time



oil painting by Sadie Petraitis



Winter Formal

Marimac McRae

I'm on a couch that smells like someone else's house. It's a good smell, homey and fresh at the same time. I slide into the corner seat with apprehension, and my nervousness forms weights my ankles and wrists, manifesting itself in the awkward placement of my hands. I can't get comfortable here quite yet, even though the seat supports me perfectly. I can't get too relaxed quite yet. The canvas rolls out, and I feel another memory forming in the atmosphere of the dimly lit living room as strongly as if there were a temperature change.

Eleven girls lay on the floor next to me in a perfect row. The dim light cannot stick to our skin with anything stronger than a subtle orange glow. My eyes trace over the girls like a piano player would trace the keys of the piano; we both know the harmony of this unseen but understood order. They are all incredibly immobile, but their arms and legs are sprawled out in different directions, implicating a kind of motion that restlessly holds the moment still.

Through the air sifts Vivian's voice reading to us. Bags lay empty, and we lay with them either lost to or claimed by the night. Empty and crumpled in the corner, I feel shadows from the deep creases in the deflated fabric under our eyes blooming like sunflowers. Through the shadows that bloom in the early hours of today, Vivian found her copy of the 3rd Harry Potter book. It is missing both covers, and the page corners

are softened by frequent turns. Vivian reads without her glasses, but she reads without missing a word. The girls lay still in their active poses on the couch, like a piano holding out a note at the end of the song. Vivian's story takes us to another world: a world beyond the party, a world that runs to its own music. I lose the lyrics that play in loops in my head in favor of falling into the waking dream of the post-party bedtime story that fills the air.

Made-up stories are caught in books, in lines that run straight on paper, in lines regulated by rules and managed by fonts. I want to catch this one, right now, somehow. The juxtaposition of these stories, the atmosphere's power to transport us, and how motion is held prisoner by sleep and some softened pages. The piano keys so alive have finally fallen silent, and only an echo of us remains lingering in the solidifying air. Through the gaps, the story of our generation reaches all of us individually, I think. I don't know if anyone else is awake and hearing this too. I don't know if anyone enjoys this as much as Vivian and I do. But I do know that my wrists feel unbound, and I sink into the couch with a kind of belonging that I would not have felt otherwise.

But just when I think I am alone, one of the girls rings out with a smile at one of the story's jokes. Then, another one rings out in harmony; she is smiling too.

I don't really know what this all means. These mature girls have let this story take them as its own. Their confidence just hours before comes beaming back to me in the unspoken tongue of memory, and I wonder if this is the side of the girls that I will see when we wake up. Will we be docile or dauntless in the daylight?

I inhale the smell of a house unfamiliar that has become familiar. I know that my last footstep of the night has become one of my favorites. I smile as my sleep starved eyes close, and the notes of Harry Potter cloud my head and put me to sleep like they always did when I was younger.

The footsteps I left come back to me, shouting in the unspoken tongue of memory. Footsteps in patterns like how-to-dance floors come back to make up my memory. They become tapestries of the night, reminding me of what happened through their brush strokes made with the remnants of motion. Memories that resonate with me fall to my fingertips, finding their place in an eternally expanding database hidden behind my locks of thick, tousled hair. Somewhere between an after party and Harry Potter, I discover that I am very glad to be in the corner.

photograph (opposite) by Janet Ann Horner

The Edge of Reality

*But, life still forces me to think,
“What if you had been caught in the universe’s spilled ink?”*

-Emily Beach



*And so here we make our choice.
Push ourselves to swim, climb, reach for the light of the surface!
Or cease our struggle and gently fall back in the waiting nothing.*

-Emily Warren

photographic details (above and opposite) by Taylor Farrington



Approach

Ella McKenzie

And let Prufrock be afraid

at the approach of the Eternal Footman, but let me be
what I was when I felt his hand, when I saw his Eye, which was purely tired.
tired like the sea at twilight. // no, not even tiredlike anything Beautiful,,, i was
tired like old egg mcmuffin wrappers settled atthebottom of the hudson river,
exhausted

as the Discarded wing of a fly

sitting on a dusty windowsill.





*mixed media on paper
by Alex Scott*

I Am the Closet and I Am the Skeleton Inside

Bianca Sass

Some people are squeamish around bones, blood
Why would your infrastructure give you qualms?
Why shy away from the very rawest parts of you?
To be reminded you are only bones, blood
is unsettling.

Yet regardless of how it feels, your body is not an ultimatum.

Remember, blood runs in rivers right below your skin
I can almost hear it rushing when I hug you, under your soft and worn
blue cotton shirt.

And remember, the wrinkles on your grandmother's face scrawl like streams on a map.

And it is beautiful,
the fossils of gravity tugging,
and her never giving in.

Don't you want to face into the wind until it tears right through you?
Don't you want to stand your ground
until the world wears you to the bone?
Bones, blood.

I am the closet and I am the skeleton inside.

Isn't it crazy to think something tangible is holding you together?
Isn't it horrid to think some would snap those ligaments like a wishbone?
Isn't it terrifying you can feel your mortality surrounding your mind like a cage?

But I know what it's like
to feel small on the inside so you battle to shrink your outside.
And I know what it's like
to steer straight, eager into excitement and
forget to roll up your windows when everything comes crashing down.
I am finding out what it's like to get back up
and put yourself together like a jigsaw puzzle.

I am the closet and I am the skeleton inside.



I Am Not a Miller

Caroline Scudder

The lawn is mowed,
Every last blade trimmed perfectly to the millimeter.
They added another hedge to our collection of isolation.
All the hard work put into the yard is not ours,
But of other men.

Some mornings when I peer through the winding stair case windows,
I can remember what it was like
The first time the house's divinity struck me like crystal.
As I sailed down each grandiose step, I was highly unaware of the security
That an anchored ship harbors.
Others were reaching, running, and rushing for what I had.
My house, my yard, my two golden retriever dogs ...

My name is Lauren Miller and to them, "enough" is not enough.
Enough is a word devoid of all meaning because in the wake of the American Dream,
Doctors with money flowing from their pockets or well-dressed business men
(and women, but how often do you hear about them) are as rich as the man on the
Side of the road with a sign that reads "No money. No home."
The "enough" people are looking for is not found in their jobs
Or their luxurious heated bathroom tile floor.
"Enough" is not tucked into any of these things...
But my father just bought another car.

oil on canvas (opposite) by Sadie Petraitis



Conflict—Inside and Out

Prematurely

Helen Riley Lazenby

It's not something you desire
But something you receive.

It's not a glance but a
Stare.

It's not a grin but an
Exclamation.

It's scarlet rather than red,
Corpse flower rather than camellia,
Arsenal rather than bullet,
Tempest rather than drizzle.

The people chased us,
Inflicted their own pains on our
Innocence,
Reprimanded us for their own
Sinfulness.

It's not something we asked for,
But something we received.

Our mothers and fathers read
All that's left of our names
From our cenotaphs
And bury their joy
Just like their joys
Buried us.

oil on canvas (opposite) by Georgia Slattery

Always War-Torn

Maya Misra

1190 CE, Jerusalem

Whenever I walked through my small town, I snorted at the desert wasteland around me and yanked furiously at my limp, dusty locks of hair. This was the so-called “Holy Land.” What was it about this place that made us want to go to war for it? To be stranded in an alien world, Christians among Muslims?

They said the Pope was giving up on the Holy War. Our Christian settlements were all being abandoned. Sometimes I’d hear my mother begging my father to leave, go back to Italy. But my father had always been far too religious. Religious enough to cart me, a tiny girl, across all of Europe to reach the holiest place on earth.

I was five, but I remembered it so well. Maybe that’s why, even now, I jumped at flickering shadows cast by dim candlelight or caved into myself whenever someone passed me. On that journey, I’d begged for my mother to carry me, but eventually her arms drooped downwards. My father never deigned to help—he’d wanted a son, and I was just a burden. Especially since my eyes were different colors, green and blue. To him that was a curse, somehow. Meanwhile, the blisters rose and popped on my feet.

My face turned red and raw to the touch. With shaking fingers, I could trace lines down the bones that jutted like mountains from my skin.

Finally we arrived...at a war-beaten desert. I could see where magnificent temples had once risen. A last shadow of the Holy Land. Now they were torn down in God’s name. I don’t know if God would have liked to see something that beautiful destroyed.

For a decade, I’d slowly settled into this new world. I’d carried water back and forth from the wells and swiped the house clean of the omnipresent dust. The monotony of life had worn in. Then the Muslims started to fight back against our conquest. And win. Suddenly everyone around us was leaving.

Yet my father insisted we stay: God would protect us. But then I heard the sound of soldiers marching off to battle. I tasted the metallic tang of weary blood on the air when they came back, their swords drooping in their hands. And I wondered if his assurances were really true. I didn’t dare say it, though. Father would slap me for it. For that, and for his pride. He came here wanting to make a new life, and he wouldn’t let himself give up on it.

So I would stay here, in this war-torn land, and pray to a God that didn’t love me.

2015, Greece

I remembered Syria. It was the only thing I’d think of when I curled into a ball at night. When I tried to forget the rest of the world. Yes, it was strange, being a Christian



photograph by Vivian Herzog

girl among Muslims. Still, I'd had Muslim friends. And plans for college, a life.

Until the civil war and ISIS. The minute they started invading Syria, people fled. But my parents, my father especially, were adamant. We were staying. It was probably just a small uprising, they argued. No need to just leave. You have college coming up. Think about that.

But I couldn't. I sat huddled in my house, day after day, praying that the militants wouldn't get us. At first, I was sure God had listened. After I'd broken down with anxiety, my mother convinced my father to leave for Europe. Within a week, my home was miles behind me. I thought I was safe.

But now, I've learned that God has a twisted sense of humor. We were safe from war, but I was stuck on a tiny Greek island, crammed among thousands of other people. I hyperventilated whenever I thought of the mob-like crush just outside the tent flaps.

I supposed the greatest irony was that I couldn't get back into Europe. Back into the place where I traced my history. My family had come from Italy, migrating during the crusades. I admired my ancestors, because they'd stuck to the home they loved for years. They were different and persecuted, but they stayed. I wished I could've done that.

Instead, every day my nose wrinkled as I passed countless tents in the refugee camp, searching for a single whiff of fresh air. This was nothing like Syria, where I could go up to the roof, and the hot, dry wind would caress my hair. Here, I couldn't escape the scent of rotting food, sewage, and the press of people. I was living like I was from a Syrian slum, not a well-off district. My eyes—one green, one blue—burned just thinking about it.

Now, I understood that my home had always been a war zone. And always would be. From the dawn of mankind, people had been pushed around, and I was only the latest in a long line of the displaced.

My parents wanted to return to the birthplace of my ancestors: Italy. But Italy wouldn't take us back. Perhaps God was punishing us for leaving the Holy Land, but wouldn't He just want us to be safe? I wasn't sure, and I was afraid to think about it too much. Because if I started thinking, I'd never stop.

So I stayed here, in a camp of war-torn people, and prayed to a God that didn't love me.

oil on canvas (opposite) by Sadie Petraitis



Alone

Valerie Sheehan

The sky is wider than I've ever seen it, mountains of clouds and dark trees in the distance and the sky is blue, bluer than the scarves we left at home. The rains have let up for the moment, and I'm allowed to see the sky, for once. I'm standing, high above the flat brown plains and miles of tents, because it's the only way I can feel above anything, above the brown water that pools on the ground, above the endless white fabric that's called home—but it's not, not now, not ever. And I let myself breathe, although the smoke in my lungs just won't dissipate, and I let my eyes open, although the clouds in them just won't be brushed away. My fingers are stiff and stinging, shoved into my coat pockets because otherwise they'd turn red, red like the setting sun. The wind is wild, up above any shelter, whipping around corners and tugging at the folds of my coat. It whispers in my ear, come with me, and I'm tempted to fall into the promise. My face is tingling, so cold it burns, not quite warm—I can almost remember what warm feels like, like home. My limbs have forgotten what it feels like to not be stiff, frozen in place by the hard ground and frost. There's hunger gnawing at my pit of a stomach, though I'm not sure if it's hunger for food or hunger to be free, but either way I feel empty, so empty, empty as the wide open sky that leans down and murmurs words of courage, be brave. I am alone. I am alone with the clouds and the blue and the brown water pooled on the ground but at least I can see, and everything is more golden and less grey but still I stand and still I do not know how much hope I should allow myself to feel.



Ceiling

Anonymous

we'll watch the ceiling.
no cracks, no
spinning fans like daisies, no
paint or dust
or fingerprints, but we'll
watch the industrial lights,
alarms, trapdoors,
the medicinal white-beige,
how we can stare and read it
like a sad story
for children; we'll watch the ceiling
as we fade into
it, as it becomes us
and our memory is jumbled
with the book of the top,
the lightless bulbs, the brown
evident sans-color,
the tree outside, and the sky,
but this, our ceiling,
is our sky. This bulb is our sun.

Stripes

Kaili Wang

Vivid stripes that are imprinted on my eyelids, an afterimage that never leaves me alone as I sleep. How could it? Big stripes, but are they really stripes? No—*puntos* actually, within the scheme of lines. Dots and lines—is that not how gringos describe Morse? I, too, am merely a dot in a conversation, a conspiracy, in a language I do not even understand myself; an ignorant participant. At least there are no stripes on my own body; my brother Mateo is not as fortunate. He is striped, locked-up behind more stripes. Two-dimensional stripes

perpendicular to three-dimensional stripes;
the government likes stripes,
doesn't he? Stripes everywhere,
stalking my tracks. The stripes of
coffee beans on my father's table,
stripes of rusting train tracks
stained red, stripes of ranunculi
that I sorely snatch day by day to
give to strangers instead of my
own wife, and stripes of the perfect
lines of these typed words. But
then, there are the stripes of the
rainbow high above the blinding delicacies of the field, a different shape than any of
the other stripes. These are the stripes I want to seize and hold closer to my
beating heart than my physical body will allow me; yet,

reason disappoints me. Oh, to be a kid again, when I could paint stripes on my face with just the bright colors, and dump out the ugly hues! Now, I am knowing, and afraid to know more. I stay far away from mirrors, in fear of what colors I may find there today.

*lithograph crayon on paper
(opposite) by Priya Patel*

The Odd Days of the Plague

Mariama Dodd

On the first day,
Came a headache
Which rendered me useless
To my friends who stood outside
In a circle holding hands

On the third day
Came the fever,
A fire someone had started
From deep within my body
That left me unable
To join the singing of my friends
Who stood in a circle holding hands

On the fifth day,
Came the retching
My blood pouring out
In black dots across my white sheets
Leaving my stomach empty
Empty
While my friends now stood outside my bedroom door
In a circle holding hands

On the seventh day
Came the delirium
From the pain of the bubo
A rotten apple
Swelling, hardening, turning black
And my friends standing in circle around my bed
Singing, "Ring around the Rosie..."
Fall down,
Still in a circle holding hands

intaglio print (opposite) by Sadie Paczosa



Bleeding

Ella McKenzie

everything is still.
even the little tree,
whose fingers quiver with the slightest draft,
is motionless.
it is so still that I wonder if it can feel

its own heartbeat.

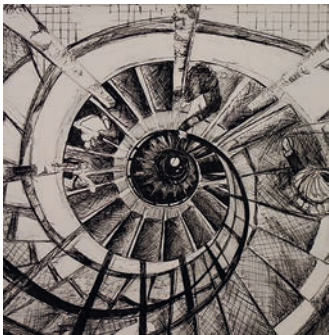
the jars are still and the chair is still
and the existence of time
is hinted only by tick of a clock
and the changing notes on the piano downstairs.
the wood floor, the bed,
the light, my breath, the guitars in the corner,
they sit as though they are over,
as though they need rest, to become a crater, to become a museum.

they look like they are waiting for something to come along
and open their skin and make them bleed like they should.

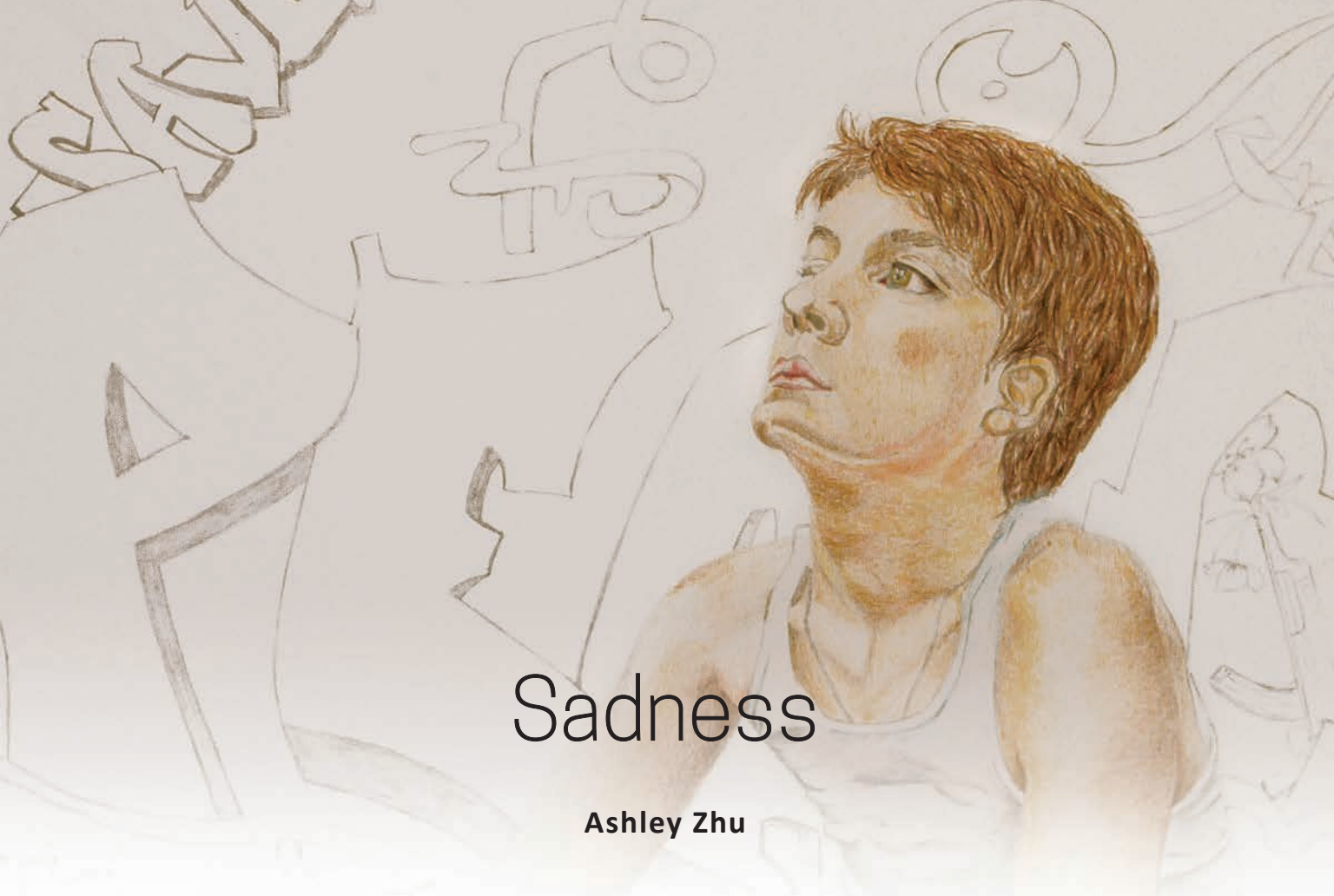
the cold is covering some of the things like a mildew frost,
like a complete stillness, like this instant has been photographed
and made to look as though it exists

in the third dimension.

*micron pen
ink drawing
by Ashley Zhu*



*colored pencil drawing
(opposite) by Jordyn Lesh*



Sadness

Ashley Zhu

is
waiting in bed
for him to come talk to you
not knowing he's already
whispering in your other ear
but you just didn't hear

is
smiling as if he is not allowed to
and being tired—
the kind of tired sleep doesn't fix

sadness

sadness
is
wondering what a bird does
when its wings are broken

is
how the night should have gone—
a birthday party—
instead of a trip to the hospital
but

sadness

madness

is
a lifetime of inadequacy
and finding synonyms for the word 'better'

is
that out of all the things one could choose to
be—

sadness

he chose to not.

Western Education

Keely Hendricks

This piece is in response to the status of the nearly three-hundred Nigerian girls who were abducted from their school by Boko Haram in 2014. Many continue to be enslaved as “wives” of jihadist militants and suffer from abuse at the hands of their captors and, ironically, anti-terrorist bombings, which do not discriminate the innocent from the guilty. A new trend is emerging in which young abducted girls volunteer to be suicide bombers, in hopes that their few moments of freedom will afford them a chance to escape.

We scratch letters in the ground.
In the dark, we pull our dirty nails across the dirt
Write, *mother, God, bread, hello.*
This is not our sin; this is how we become free.

Two years I have not read,
But every day, I write, I writhe—
See the weight of letters?

When bombs shake us, bodies shake us;
We scratch the ground.
Gritting teeth, we make *A*, we make *B*,
Until we cannot see.

When they ask, *Who shall go today?*
My dirty nails claw the sky: *me, me—*
My ticking treasure sits heavy on my head, unheard,
In my scarves.

I starve
So I go, heavy head, heavy heart—
Pray for a soldier, someone who will see
One of them! they will cry, and I will say without fear,

I am Chibok, do you remember me?
What you see is not my sin, I swear.
This is how I will go free.

monoprint (opposite) by Sadie Petraitis



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